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COMM201
NEWS STORY:

TWO MUNI RAILWAY REPAIRMEN DIE IN UNDERGROUND EQUIPMENT MISHAP

Two Muni Railway repairmen ~~died earlier~~ ^{were killed} today when the underground equipment ~~that~~ they were scheduled to ~~repair~~ in the Nob Hill area ~~of~~ ^{at} California and Mason streets moved, crushing both men.

According to ~~Battalion Chief Ray Landi~~ ^{A.M. SAID}, who arrived at the scene at 11:22, one of the men, Leonie De Vost, 55, of 185 19th Ave., "was virtually cut in half" and apparently died instantly when the equipment moved.

~~The other repairman,~~ Daniel Thomas Sullivan, 40, of 907 Athens St., died shortly after arriving at Mission Emergency Hospital, according to the nursing director.

The equipment consists of two ~~ten~~ ¹⁰-foot ~~in~~ ¹⁵ diameter wheels that lie horizontally on top of each other with cable ~~threaded~~ between them like a spool of thread.

How the accident ~~specifically~~ ^{was} occurred is not fully known ~~at this time~~ ^{at}. Muni Railway spokesperson, Robert Rockwell said ~~that~~ ^{The} ~~it~~ ^{the} might have been a matter of bad timing.

"No work had been scheduled to be done in the tunnel until 1 p.m.," Rockwell said, "but Sullivan and De Vost might have gone down early to house their tools, or make an orientation visit or something like that."

Rockwell speculated that workers ~~somewhere~~ ^{elsewhere} else in the line, not knowing the two men were under the street at California and

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Mason, might have slacked off the cable, causing the wheels to move enough to trap the two.

A gripman for Muni Railway, Sam McDaniel, who was among the workers who gathered at California and Mason when word of the accident got out, said ~~that~~ he thought an axle holding the wheels might have fallen, sending the wheels onto the repairmen.

One angry gripman, who refused to be identified, said ~~that~~ the accident was probably the result of Muni cutbacks in maintenance personnel.

"These were inexperienced workers, and they had no supervisors with them," he said. An experienced worker would have pushed a safety bolt between the huge wheels, keeping them from moving even if the cable moves, according to the gripman. The gripman speculated that considering the inexperience of De Vost and Sullivan, they might have even loosened some bolts and inadvertently started the wheels in motion themselves.

"It's the same old story that you need something like this to bring the situation home to the public," said the gripman.

Rockwell denied that inexperience was a factor in this accident, claiming ~~that~~ the work the victims were doing was ~~of a~~ routine nature. "The fact remains that they were in the repair area an hour and a half before work was supposed to commence," Rockwell ~~concluded~~.
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